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HB 2070 and HB 2071

RELATING TO WATER RESOURCES

Statement for
House Committee on Water, Land Use Development and Hawaiian Homes
Public Hearing 8 February 1978

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HB 2070 and HB 2071 propose amendments to provisions in HRS 176 that pertain to water resources and their development. This statement on these bills does not reflect an institutional position of the University.

HB 2070 would add a new section to HRS 176 that would require submission of an analysis of the hydrologic consequences of any proposed water development, opportunity for public review of the analysis, and acceptance of the analysis by the Board of Land and Natural Resources prior to the undertaking of the development.

HB 2071 would require a report each year by the Board of Land and Natural Resources reviewing the status of water resources and their development in the State.

Serious questions have been raised as to the adequacy of water resources in Hawaii. As pointed out in the findings in HB 2070, further water developments may have significant consequences. However, this is true only in some areas of the State, not in the State as a whole.

The Department of Land and Natural Resources should certainly be much concerned with the overall water resources of the State, and not merely the water resources owned or developed by the State. However, the State Water Commission, recently appointed by the Governor, will, presumably within the next year, determine the problem areas, and how serious and how imminent the problems may be.

Although the purposes of both bills are worthwhile, there is, then a question whether amendments to State law intended to serve these purposes could be prepared with greater specificity a year from now.

There is also a question whether the purposes of HB 2070 could be met by requiring environmental impact statements for water development projects better than by requiring separate analyses of the hydrologic problems.